

Saintbridge Allotment Gardens Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 29th
November 2023 at St. Oswald's Church Hall.

Attendees

Plot number

Stephen Simpson	58B, 64 & 65B
Tracey Simpson	58B, 64 & 65B
Helen Dallyn	50B
Dave Johnson	89Aa & B
Karen Franks	63B, 66B & 67B
Ken Beedon	2A & 3
Chris Russell	10
Frank Prentice	43B
Rob Fillby	5A & B
Clive Garvey	93B, 94A & 95
Cassandra Shakes	115Ab & 115B
Kay Byard	86Ab

1 Welcome and introduction.

The chairman Steve Simpson welcomed those present to the meeting and read out the apologies received as follows.

I have had apologies from Faith Howcroft, Derek Austin, Sandra Thomas, Dave Brown, Andy Hedges and Chris Ellicott who asked me to pass on this message 'Thanks again to all the committee members for the work and time they put in, and to the people who get their hands dirty on the working parties.'

Steve drew attention to the pre-reading materials emailed to all members prior to the meeting, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

2 Minutes and actions from the last AGM.

The minutes of the last AGM were accepted as a true record of the meeting. The following actions arising were dealt with.

Treasurer's report – this report now includes details of the key deposits held by SAGA.

Scarecrow competition – this did not take place in 2023 so will roll forward into 2024.

Install 6foot high around the corner flower plot (31D & E) which is unsuitable for hedging as it would significantly impair visibility at the t junction. This has not happened yet due to costs, but with some alterations the length of fencing can be reduced to 25 metres. We have had some donated materials and hope to complete this activity in January / February 2024 weather permitting.

Some plot holder expressed difficulty using their keys on one of the locks so alterations have been made to the lock.

Install bench seating around the walnut tree – the ground under the walnut tree has been sown to shade tolerant grass and spring bulbs, but the benches are yet to be installed due to financial constraints. Should anyone know of any suitable benches that could be donated to this project please email sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk. The aim is to provide a place for quiet contemplation to remember all the plot holders that have passed away, possible to include a commemorative plaque. We are all custodians of our plots at Saintbridge allotments and we should remember those that looked after the ground before us.

3 Chairman's report.

Steve presented the Chairman's report to the attendees and it was accepted, a copy of the report is attached to these minutes.

Actions arising from 2022 AGM

Community gardens – this continues to be used by the GloActive Group, and in late Summer 2023 we had enquiries from 3 other groups but these are yet to start work. New groups are welcome to apply to use the gardens but they may need to be down scaled should these not materialise.

A new roof was put on the swap shop which continues to be well used. Steve requested that should anyone put anything in the swap shop could they post it on our Facebook group Saintbridge Allotments so everyone knows what is there.

4 Treasurer's report.

Helen Dalyn presented the Treasurer's report, a copy of which is attached. Helen explained the report covers the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The money taken for key deposits is kept in SAGA'S bank account and recorded as a separate item as requested at the 2022 AGM

7 Election of Officers and Committee members.

The nominations received were as follows:

SAGA Chairman – Stephen Simpson (plots 58B, 64 & 65B). Nominated by Ken Beedon (plot 2A & 3), seconded by Ross Owen Beamish (plot 52A).

SAGA Secretary – Tracey Simpson (plots 58B, 64 & 65B). Nominated by Gaynor Parker (plot 72A), seconded by Mary Mustoe (plot 76Aa).

SAGA Treasurer – Helen Dallyn (plot 50B). Nominated by Andy Hedges (plot 33), seconded by Chris Ellicott (plot 54B).

Committee member – David Johnson (plot 89Ab & B). Nominated by John Merrick (plot 90Ab & 90B), seconded by Stephen Simpson (plots 58A, 64 & 65B).

Committee member – Karen Franks (plots 63B, 66B & 67B). Nominated by Cheryl Dyke (plot 51Ab), seconded by Tracey Simpson (plots 58B, 64 & 65B).

In the absence of any other nominees, they were elected en bloc.

8 Future activities and any other business

Steve briefly outlined SAGA's routine activities of hedge cutting, coppicing Hazel for bean poles, and making plots ready for re-let.

Site security – plans to put 6-foot fencing around the corner flower plot (31D & E) as outlined above have been scaled back to a 25-metre stretch of fencing, and some materials have been donated so hopefully, weather permitting, this work can take place in Jan / Feb 2024.

The double gates by the pond need reinforcing with anti-climb mesh. Gloucester City Council (GCC) donated some Heras fencing panels that can be cut into shape and added to the outside of the gates.

Anti-vandal paint was discussed, with a view to putting it on the tops of the gates, subject to agreement from GCC. Tracey agreed to email Faith Howcroft for her views on this.

The chain link fencing behind the shop had to be repaired in 2023 after trees in the perimeter were chopped down. This was achieved using left over materials, but longer-term hedging would provide a more permanent solution. SAGA need to obtain hedging whips, but Frank suggested that we could take cuttings from our existing hedgerows.

SAGA are having difficulty getting keys returned when a plot holder leaves. As set out in the pre-reading materials the cost of keys has increased to £9.20 including VAT. We need to order more keys, and due to economies of scale and to outrun inflation we need to order up 50 more keys. It was unanimously agreed that we have to increase the key deposit to £20 per key. This will apply to new plot holders, and replacement keys should they get lost.

The lighting suggested by Gloucester Police following their site visit was discussed and unanimously rejected on the grounds of cost.

The hard surface roads around the site are full of pot holes, with Steve pointing out that this acts as a natural traffic slowing mechanism.

The grass overflow car parks have continued to be used despite the wet weather, risking cars getting stuck and large ruts being left that have to be filled in. Steve will put signage up to stop the use of these grassed areas during the Winter.

A question was asked about the grass cutting along the backs of the garages on Cheney Close. Tracey advised that she has chased Faith about this previously, as their contractors should cut from the t junction (plot 10) all the way down to plot 1. This is often made impossible by cars parking by plot 10, but it was also noted that the backs of the garages have become over grown and need to be cut back to enable the contractors mowers to get down there. This activity needs to be scheduled in.

No further issues were raised, and the floor thanked the committee for all their hard work maintaining and promoting the allotment site.

Steve thanked everyone for their attendance and their contributions and brought the meeting to a close at 8.00pm.

Attachment One - Pre-reading materials AGM 2023

Background

Gloucester City Council are responsible for the overall management of the allotment site and issue the tenancy agreements, collect the rent, and manage the waiting list of prospective tenants. The activities of all ploholders are governed by the tenancy agreement they sign with the City Council and the allotment rules and responsibilities. The allotment site is maintained by each individual tenant working their own plot in accordance with the tenancy agreement. If you would like an up-to-date copy of the allotment rules and responsibilities please email sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk.

The Saintbridge Allotment Gardens Association (SAGA) was founded in 2009 and our mission is to ensure the Saintbridge allotments are made available to local residents who wish to follow the recreation of gardening to benefit their health and wellbeing. We are a voluntary organisation, all ploholders are members and can choose to play an active role if they wish. There are no subscription fees as we fund raise from sales of green manure seeds, hazel bean poles and horse manure to cover annual operating costs. We hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to elect a new committee and guide the activities of SAGA.

SAGA supports the City Council by showing vacant plots to prospective tenants. SAGA also keeps an updated data base of all ploholders. When plots are left uncultivated or other breaches of the tenancy agreement occur SAGA informs the City Council who then contacts the tenant to seek a resolution of the situation, or if necessary, terminate the tenancy. SAGA receives an annual maintenance grant from Gloucester City Council of £ 540.00. This funding is used to carryout routine maintenance such as hedge cutting, repairs to fencing, gates, water supply etc. Where vacant plots are badly infested with perennial weeds or have large amounts of rubbish on them, SAGA clears the plots and carries out weed control to make them ready to be re let. This activity is also funded by the maintenance grant. We are distributing these pre-reading materials and invite your comments and feedback to inform the committee and AGM.

Routine activities

Throughout the year SAGA collects horse manure which is stored in a compound on the community garden. The manure is sold to plot holders in October at £ 2.00 per wheelbarrow. This year's sales totalled £ 316.00 with all the proceeds going to fund SAGA'S activities.

Many ploholders see the benefits of mustard as a weed supressing crop sown in the autumn. Bulk buying the seed enables SAGA to pass on huge cost savings to ploholders and make a small profit for SAGA. We continued this scheme with seeds available for sale in September. Total sales came to £ 72.11.

Coppicing the hazel to produce bean poles is carried out in the winter, with one sixth of the area cut each year on a six-year rotation. The bean sticks are sold at 50 pence each, or 12 for £5.00 and SAGA will request a working party to cut and bundle them later this year.

Trimming the hedgerows is carried out twice a year in the summer and autumn. The hedgerows were planted by SAGA to improve security and provide habitat for wildlife. The trimmings are shredded using a mower and composted.

Only plots that are badly infested with perennial weeds or have large amounts of rubbish on them require intervention by SAGA to get them ready for relet. This year 10 plots were cleared prior to relet.

The wildflower meadow strip is cut, and the vegetation removed once a year usually in August. The wildflower strip provides habitat for beneficial insects and pollinators. SAGA welcomes this activity and if you would like to look after a similar area near to your plot please contact us.

You may have noticed the cottage garden floral display on the corner between Cheney Close and the track leading to Birch Avenue. This was established by SAGA to give an attractive feature, provide habitat for pollinators and discourage fly tipping. This is because the land is heavily contaminated with broken glass, stones and other debris making it unlettable. Feedback from plot holders and local residents continues to be appreciative.

SAGA established a community garden with the vision to provide a vibrant, welcoming place for people of all ages to come, enjoy pleasant surroundings, and get involved in activities that encourage health and well-being. The composting toilet installed originally for the community garden was opened for use by all plot holders, unfortunately it had to be closed again as it was not being kept clean.

Users of the community garden currently consist of a group of adults with special needs from the community group GloActive, attending every Thursday. We are looking for volunteers to help run the gardens, possibly with additional groups attending on different days, or an individual basis. If you would like to find out more or be involved in this activity please contact

sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk

Site security

There has been a dramatic reduction in the level of opportunist crime and vandalism on site since the introduction of a padlock and key system in September 2022. There remains a need to address weak points in the perimeter security. The actions identified include:

Install six foot chain link fencing around the corner of the site at the T junction from Cheney Close leading to Birch Avenue. This area is not suitable for hedging as this would impede visibility for vehicles at the T junction.

Install anti-climb mesh on the double gates by the balancing pond as people can climb the existing chain link on the gates.

A hole in the chain link fence behind the corner shop was patched. This 70-metre section of fence could be planted to hedgerow to give an affordable long-term solution.

The cost of keys is increasing with inflation, from £5.50 in March 2022 to £ 7.50 in April 2023, and several plot holders are not returning their keys after giving up their plot. There is a need to increase the deposit for new keys to cover the future replacement costs. A minimum of £15.00 is suggested.

Gloucester City Council have provided signs instructing all plot holders to keep the gates always locked. These signs will be installed shortly.

The possibility of installing solar powered lighting operated by PIR sensor was raised by the local police. We are reporting the results of our investigation of the costs for such a project for your consideration and feedback. This intervention requires installation of a 12-foot scaffold pole to

mount the light @ £100.00 and the solar powered light unit @ £40.00. Giving a total cost of £140.00 per light. Assuming one light per gate this would give a total cost of £980.00. The lights would have an ongoing maintenance cost to replace them every two years. This would be £20.00 per light per year, or £140.00 per year for 7 lights

Actions from the 2022 AGM

The 2023 Treasurer's report should include the amount of funds received from key deposits. Action implemented.

The meeting felt that the scarecrow competition could be implemented next year. This action was not carried out due time constraints. Action carried forward.

Install six-foot chain-link fencing around the corner of the site at the T junction from Cheney Close leading to Birch Avenue. This was not implemented as costs increased due to inflation. This activity is rescheduled to install 25 m of fence in January or February, weather permitting.

Some plot holders had difficulty in closing a padlock in the confined space available. The gate in question has been altered accordingly. Action closed.

Work on the proposal to install bench seating around the large Walnut tree to provide a place for recreation, rest from the hot sun, and on occasion quiet contemplation was started. The area was cleared and sown to a shade tolerant grass mix by John Merrick. As gardeners we are custodians of the allotment site, and when our time here is finished working our plot, the land is passed on to the next generation. We would like to erect a commemorative plaque outlining this sentiment, remembering those that have gone before us, and welcoming new arrivals. We are also looking for suitable donated seating. If you would like to be involved in this activity please contact sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk

Any other business

In addition to the topics covered above, the meeting will give time to discuss matters raised by plot holders. If you have any points or issues you would like to raise at the meeting, please contact sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk

Attachment Two - Chairman's Report

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the 14th AGM of the Saintbridge Allotment Gardens Association for the year 2022/23 and thank you all for taking the time to come along this evening.

During the year SAGA continued routine works and held working parties for coppicing hazel and preparing bean sticks, hedge cutting and clearing rubbish from vacant plots. I would like to thank all those who came along to give a hand. One of the small pedestrian gates into the Cheney Close side of the site was replaced with donated materials and a new padlock financed by Ross Beamish. During the year the grass paths to four plots were realigned and seeded when these plots became vacant.

Activities on the community garden continued in 2023 with the group from GloActive attending every Thursday. I would like to thank Bert Newman, Helen Dallyn and Ken Beedon for their help in supporting this activity. We are looking for additional volunteers to help with the community garden.

Unfortunately, the composting toilet had to be closed to plot holders as it became impossible to keep it clean. It is now only available to users of the community garden.

A new roof was put on the swap shop which is located on the community garden. It continues to be well used by plot holders and is a useful way of sharing surplus plants, vegetables, etc. If you can, please post on the Facebook page when you put something in the swap shop so that others know what is there.

The allotment site is currently divided into 309 plots of various sizes. During the period 1st November 2022 to 30th October 2023 a total of 58 plots were relet. This gives an 18% annual turnover of plots. Despite this, the number of people on the waiting list remains around 40 to 50 as new people continue to join the waiting list. To accommodate this demand the vacant half plots are split and let as two quarter plots.

The allotment site and balancing pond were given the Green Flag Award[®] again this year. This scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom and around the world.

I would like to thank John Merrick for continuing to manage the Association's web site and Facebook page, Helen Dallyn our Treasurer, and committee members Karen Franks and Dave Johnson for all their work. I would also like to extend special thanks to Tracey Simpson, our secretary who is the silent heartbeat, constantly working in the background to keep everything going. Lastly, I would like to remind everyone that the overall appearance of the allotment site is largely due to the individual plot holders working their plots, the efforts of all committee members and the volunteers who help on working parties. I thank you all.

This ladies and gentleman concludes the chairman's report. Thank you

SAGA Chair
Stephen Simpson
29th November 2023

Attachment Three Treasurer's Report

SAGA Bank Balance as at 1 April 2022	2127.76
Income:	4059.70
Expenditure:	2765.20
Balance as at 31 March 2023	3422.26

The SAGA bank balance is currently made up of SAGA'S own funds and two separate grant funds earmarked for specific activities. There is also the sum acquired from the collection of site key deposits. These are as follows:

- The Gloucester Federation of Gardening Societies grant for the community garden
- The Gloucester City Council maintenance grant for maintenance of the allotment site
- Allotment key deposits

Expenditure

Of the expenditure above £2327.89 was spent on additional padlocks, keys and fuel. £284.95 went towards post mix, stump removal, gift vouchers, fuel and chain link fencing. Renewal of our website was £71.86 with £55.50 covering our public liability insurance. Finally, hire of the hall for the AGM was £25.00.

Income

The sale of hazel sticks, mustard seed, horse manure, spraying and slabs raised £495.00. There was a donation of £64.90 with £2959.80 collected from key deposits. We received our usual annual Maintenance Grant of £540.00 from Gloucester City Council.

- The balance left in the Gloucester Federation of Gardening Societies is £200.00, which is earmarked for a raised bed on the community garden
- The balance in the Gloucester City Council Maintenance Grant is £403.96
- Collection of key deposits £2,729.80 (not shown as part of SAGA's funds)

This gives the balance of SAGA's own funds as £3422.26 - £200 - £403.96 - £2729.80 = £88.50

HELEN DALLYN, TREASURER
SAGA

8 November 2023

